FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Name of Action: Edwards Air Force Base Digital Airport Surveillance Radar

The Department of Defense (DoD) proposes to construct a Digital Airport Surveillance Radar (DASR) system that would connect to the High Desert Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) at Edwards Air Force Base (AFB) in California. This proposed action is part of the DoD National Airspace System (NAS) Program, which involves the replacement of analog air traffic control systems with state-of-the-art digital air traffic control equipment on U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force (USAF) bases throughout the country. The implementation of the NAS program, which also includes the installation of DoD Advanced Automation Systems (DAAS) and Voice Communications Switching Systems (VCSS) at DoD bases, was previously evaluated in a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (1995).

The EA for Edwards AFB addresses the site-specific impacts of locating a DASR system on Edwards AFB (High Desert), and evaluates the consequences of the DASR system construction on both the natural and man-made environments. The DAAS and VCSS components of the NAS Program at Edwards AFB would be located within existing buildings, and impacts are anticipated to be minor. The primary consequences of the DASR system evaluated in the EA involve the construction and operation of an ASR-11 radar system on Edwards AFB to replace and demolish the existing ASR-8 facility.

The DASR system at Edwards AFB is needed to replace the existing ASR-8 facility. The ASR-11 will improve system reliability, provide additional weather data, reduce maintenance costs, improve performance, and provide digital data input to proposed new digital automation system air traffic controller displays. While the existing ASR-8 at Edwards AFB was installed in 1992, the proposed new ASR-11 will take advantage of the significantly increased capabilities of digital technology. The proposed new DASR system will serve to accurately locate aircraft in terms of range, azimuth, and latitude; provide information regarding aircraft identification code; identify emergency conditions; and report six discrete weather precipitation levels.

The No Action Alternative was evaluated. This option would result in the continued use of the existing ASR-8 facility. This would deny Edwards AFB of the improved system reliability, additional weather data, reduced maintenance costs, and improved performance offered by the new DASR system; thus, this alternative was not chosen. Three alternative sites (Sites 1, 2, and 7) were evaluated for location of the ASR-11. Site 1 is located on South Base approximately 800 feet east of the existing ASR-8 near Center Street. Site 2 is located on South Base approximately 800 feet west-northwest of the existing ASR-8. Site 7 is located on Main Base near Rosamond Boulevard, approximately 500 feet north of the existing TRACON facility. All three sites feature characteristics that would generally make any of these locations an acceptable location for the radar facility from operational and environmental perspectives. The area surrounding Site 7 is more developed compared to the other two sites. While the site is currently undeveloped land on a slight slope with sparse desert vegetation, the site is immediately adjacent to the existing TRACON and parking lots. Site 7 is located near the boundary between two different future land

use designations, aircraft operations and maintenance and outdoor recreation. Sites 1 and 2 have similar environmental characteristics including sparse desert vegetation and relatively undeveloped surroundings with the exception of the existing ASR-8 facility. Both sites are located within the former site of a World War II hospital. The Base Historic Preservation Officer has indicated, however, that this cultural resource is not eligible for listing on the National Register. Therefore, no cultural resource concerns would be expected if either of these sites were chosen. Site 2 is located within an IRP site (the location of a former underground storage tank [UST]) that is classified as closed. No hazardous materials concerns are anticipated if this site were chosen.

If Site 1 were selected as the preferred alternative, no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, air quality, water resources, safety and occupational health, hazardous substances and solid waste, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, socioeconomics, infrastructure, or energy resources would be anticipated. Approximately 1 acre of sparse desert scrub vegetation would be cleared for the site and access road; additional clearing may be required along utility installation routes. Connections to both telephone and electricity service lines would require trenches approximately 800 feet long. The fiber optic connection would be approximately 550 feet long unless the Base proposed fiber optic extension along Jones Road is not completed, or does not have sufficient fiber to support the ASR-11. In either of these cases, the fiber optic connection route for Site 1 would be approximately 18,000 feet.

If Site 2 were selected as the preferred alternative, no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, air quality, water resources, safety and occupational health, hazardous substances and solid waste, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, socioeconomics, infrastructure, or energy resources would be anticipated. Approximately 1 acre of sparse desert scrub vegetation would be cleared for the site and access road; additional clearing may be required along utility installation routes. Connections to both telephone and electricity service lines would require trenches approximately 300 feet long. The fiber optic connection would be approximately 400 feet long unless the Base proposed fiber optic extension along Jones Road is not completed, or does not have sufficient fiber to support the ASR-11. In either of these cases, the fiber optic connection route for Site 2 would be approximately 20,000 feet.

If Site 7 were selected as the preferred alternative, no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, air quality, water resources, safety and occupational health, hazardous substances and solid waste, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, socioeconomics, infrastructure, or energy resources would be anticipated. Approximately 1 acre of sparse desert scrub vegetation would be cleared for the site and access road; additional clearing may be required along utility installation routes. Connections to both telephone and electricity service lines would require trenches approximately 600 feet long. The fiber optic connection would be approximately 500 feet long, connecting to the existing TRACON.

Operation of the DASR system is anticipated to have minimal long-term impacts to the natural and human environments. The radar would generate radio frequency radiation (RFR) while operating. However, the RFR generated would be safe to humans at ground level and is not anticipated to pose harm to the general population. During the DASR system operation, fuel and other hazardous materials may be used at the site,

such as engine oil and grease. However, use and disposal of any hazardous materials would occur in compliance with Edwards AFB protocols and guidelines as well as applicable State and Federal regulations. Consequently, it is anticipated that operational use of hazardous materials would not adversely affect the natural or human environments.

It is anticipated that few mitigation measures would be required during construction and operation of the facility. During the construction period, sheeting or supports of some kind may be used in the areas excavated for the tower footings and utility trenches in order to prevent collapse of these excavated areas. To minimize noise impacts during construction, mufflers would be used on construction equipment and vehicles. In addition, all equipment and vehicles used during construction would be maintained in good operating condition so that emissions are minimized, thus reducing the potential for air quality impacts. Dust would be controlled on site by using water to wet down disturbed areas. All areas disturbed for the DASR system construction would be seeded with a grass mixture or covered with a geotextile fabric and crushed stone to stabilize the disturbed soils, in order to minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation. All hazardous materials used during construction would be handled and disposed of in accordance with Edwards AFB policies and protocols and all applicable State and Federal regulations. Traffic management measures would be developed to facilitate traffic flow and pedestrian access.

During operation of the DASR system, fuel would be stored at an aboveground storage tank (AST) and some hazardous materials, such as equipment oil or grease, may be used at the site. Similar to the construction period, all hazardous materials used during operation would be used and disposed of in accordance with Edwards AFB policies and protocols and all applicable State and Federal regulations in order to minimize the potential for media contamination.

Based on this summary of effects, along with the detailed description of the effects provided in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that construction of the ASR-11 at Site 1, which is the site that I have selected, will not have a significant impact on the human environment. For this reason, no Environmental Impact Statement needs to be prepared.

Richard Wood, AFFTC/EM Date